

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend claims 23, 31 and 32 and cancel claims 1-3 and 22 in accordance with the following listing showing the status of all claims in the application.

1-22 (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) A method of alerting a user of an e-mail client application prior to the user sending an e-mail message, said method comprising: obtaining an indication that a user wishes to send an e-mail message to a designated e-mail address;

in response to said indication and prior to the user sending the e-mail message, transmitting a request to a remote device regarding a current availability of a recipient that is associated with the designated e-mail address;

receiving a reply that indicates ~~the availability of the recipient at the designated e-mail address; and~~ at least one of: (i) no current email message receiving capability or (ii) no current email message handling capability; and

alerting the user, prior to the user sending the e-mail message, ~~if the reply indicates~~ that the recipient is not currently available at the designated e-mail address.

24. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein the indication that the user wishes to send the e-mail message comprises entry of the designated e-mail address as an intended recipient of the e-mail message.

25. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 24, wherein the request is transmitted as soon as the designated e-mail address, as entered, has been resolved.

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 24, wherein the request is transmitted automatically in response to entry of the designated e-mail address as an intended recipient of the e-mail message.

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein the user is alerted that the recipient is not currently available at the designated e-mail address while the user still is composing the e-mail message.

28. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein the user is visually alerted that the recipient is not currently available at the designated e-mail address.

29. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein the request is transmitted to a server that is known to maintain a database of current availability statuses for different e-mail addresses.

30. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein the reply indicates if (1) the email address of the recipient e-mail address is not valid or no longer valid, (2) the recipient e-mail address is set in an auto-reply mode, or (3) the auto-reply mode for the recipient e-mail address is not set.

31. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for alerting a user of an e-mail client application, prior to the user sending an e-mail message, that the intended recipient is not currently available at a user-designated e-mail address, said apparatus comprising:

a processor for executing stored program instruction steps; and

a memory connected to the processor for storing the program instruction steps,

wherein the program instruction steps include steps of:

obtaining an indication that a user wishes to send an e-mail message to a designated e-mail address;

in response to said indication and prior to the user sending the e-mail message, transmitting a request to a remote device regarding a current availability of a recipient that is associated with the designated e-mail address;

receiving a reply that indicates ~~the availability of the recipient at the designated e-mail address;~~ and at least one of: (i) no current email message receiving capability or (ii) no current email message handling capability; and

alerting the user, prior to the user sending the e-mail message, ~~if the reply indicates~~ that the recipient is not currently available at the designated e-mail address.

32. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for alerting a user of an e-mail client application, prior to the user sending an e-mail message, that the intended recipient is not currently available at a user-designated e-mail address, said apparatus comprising:

means for obtaining an indication that a user wishes to send an e-mail message to a designated e-mail address;

means for, in response to said indication and prior to the user sending the e-mail message, transmitting a request to a remote device regarding a current availability of a recipient that is associated with the designated e-mail address;

means for receiving a reply that indicates ~~the availability of the recipient at the designated e-mail address;~~ and at least one of: (i) no current email message receiving capability or (ii) no current email message handling capability; and

means for alerting the user, prior to the user sending the e-mail message, ~~if the reply indicates~~ that the recipient is not currently available at the designated e-mail address.